



THE URBAN/SUBURBAN RACCOON

Raccoons are common throughout California. They are medium sized animals 12-35+ pounds and 20-40 inches long, including a bushy tail with 4 to 7 black rings. The fur has a salt and pepper appearance with the black mask marking on a whitish face characteristic of the species. The tracks of raccoons are very distinctive. The hind foot is long, narrow, and rests flat on the ground like those of a bear. The front paw is hand-like, with toes that are

long and well separated.

Raccoons have been a part of urban life. In years past, they were found in relatively undeveloped areas; however, with the onset of urban sprawl, their natural habitat was lost.

Nevertheless, raccoons are intelligent and hardy animals, adapting to life in an urban area. Raccoons are usually seen foraging for food at night and in the early morning hours. They seek food in garbage cans, pet dishes that are left outside, vegetable gardens, and other man-made sources. When food is readily available, raccoon populations increase. Under these circumstances, problems occur.

In urban areas, raccoons can damage buildings (particularly attics and roofs), gardens, fruit trees, lawns, garbage cans, and trash containers. They are also attracted to pet food left outdoors and will attack pets. Occasionally, one or more raccoons will establish a communal toilet area.

Females normally give birth between February and April, though it is not uncommon to find new litters outside of these parameters. Prior to bearing young, raccoon mothers seek a safe den, which frequently is inside an attic, garage, storage shed or other location. Raccoons have one litter a year consisting of 3-5 babies. Though juvenile raccoons look adorable, they should never be captured and kept as pets. They are wild animals, and once they reach maturity, usually by two years of age, they become difficult to manage and are prone to biting and scratching. It is unlawful to keep raccoons as pets for this and other safety reasons.



All wildlife species including raccoons, can carry diseases and parasites. Raccoons are known carriers of rabies, canine distemper, encephalitis, histoplasmosis, trypanosomiasis, coccidiosis, toxoplasmosis, tularemia, tuberculosis, listeriosis, leptospirosis, roundworms and mange. They are also infested with fleas, ticks, lice and mites that are known transmitters of disease. Children and pets are particularly at risk.

In the City of Long Beach area, the likelihood of a raccoon being infected with rabies is remote. However, wild animals do not have the benefit of veterinary care and may potentially carry and transmit a number of diseases and parasites. For this reason, children should be encouraged to stay away from all wild animals they encounter, and pets should be brought indoors at night. This will help prevent any interaction with wild animals.

Animal Care Services will respond to and impound any raccoon that is:

- Injured/Sick/Dead
- Has been involved in a bite with a human

If any of these conditions exist, please call City of Long Beach Animal Care Services at:

(562) 570-7387